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FIFTIETH SESSION

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 88: AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/49/45, A/48/841, A/50/254-E/1995/101, E/1995/18, A/50/425-E/1995/78)

1. The CHAIRMAN, recalling that the General Assembly had established an ad hoc open-ended working group under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly to elaborate further an agenda for development, said that agreement had been reached on a structure consisting of three main chapters and on a synthesis text consisting of the first two chapters, as the basis for discussion, had brought the working group closer to completion of its task. He drew attention to the progress report (A/49/45) submitted by the working group, particularly to paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.

2. Mr. MONFORT (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that they attached great importance to an early and successful conclusion of the negotiations on an agenda for development. The agenda should be action oriented and should provide the framework for implementing existing international commitments for development and for promoting sustained economic growth and social development. It should also stress the need for increased external resources to support economic growth and restore development issues to the top of the United Nations agenda, thus creating a better balance between development, on the one hand, and peace-keeping and other activities, on the other.

3. In order to allow adequate time for preparation for the negotiations, the Group of 77 and China were of the view that the working group's next session should be scheduled for three weeks.

4. Mr. LACLAUSTRA (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that an agenda for development offered a unique opportunity to send a strong message on the need for a new commitment to international cooperation for development based on an integrated approach. Although much remained to be done, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group had made encouraging progress.

5. The European Union believed that the three chapters were all equally important and that they should mirror the world's current political and socio-economic situation and the new consensus that had emerged from recent international conferences as well as the need for the United Nations system to adjust its machinery to those new realities. In that regard, it was vitally important that an agenda for development should reflect the fact that peace and development were inter-related and that an agenda for development and an Agenda for Peace were complementary. Account should also be taken of the growing economic differentiation among developing countries, as such differentiation provided an opportunity for increased partnership between those developing countries that had registered rapid growth and were participating in the world economy and the poorest developing countries that were being marginalized. The social and environmental dimensions of development as well as fundamental factors, particularly democracy, the respect of human rights, the empowerment of women and a participatory approach to development, were equally important for the attainment of people-centred sustainable development.

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6. Mobilization of both domestic resources - through, inter alia, increased national savings, an effective taxation system and a reduction of military expenditure - and external resources was imperative for the achievement of that goal. In that regard, the European Union remained committed to devoting 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of its member countries to official development assistance and 0.15 per cent of GNP to the least developed countries. The approach should be comprehensive and should encompass all available sources, including private flows, and the agenda should also address the issue of the effectiveness of aid and the priority to be given to basic social services.

7. Finally, there was a strong case for reform of the United Nations machinery in order to improve its capacity to respond to the needs of developing countries. An agenda for development should address the need for better focused and more integrated roles for all United Nations bodies. The respective roles of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must be further enhanced and cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions should be strengthened. The United Nations should build on the work already done to improve field-level coordination of the United Nations development system by supporting the resident coordinator system, preparing country strategy notes and focusing on the comparative advantages of that system.

8. The European Union was firmly committed to the adoption of a concise, substantial and innovative agenda for development during the current session.

9. Mr. MOON (Republic of Korea) said that, in the new world of globalization, traditional ways of achieving development were beginning to lose their effect. Since the United Nations had 50 years of experience in development and a vast global network, reform of the system should aim at strengthening, not reducing, the role of the United Nations in the area of development.

10. The private sector and government should complement each other's role, with government taking primary responsibility for implementing national development strategy, while encouraging the active participation of the private sector. Although development was a multi-faceted concept, it should be acknowledged that economic growth was the mainspring of development and that in order to achieve economic growth and greater social equality, it was necessary to promote education and human resource development.

11. It was very important to publicize the agenda for development, as its ultimate purpose was to inspire the political will and genuine commitment of all Governments and peoples to development and to consolidate international cooperation.

12. Mr. ADECHI (Benin) expressed the hope that completion of an agenda for development would be among the first major actions taken by the United Nations during its fiftieth anniversary year.

13. Three main objectives must be achieved. First, an inventory should be conducted of the commitments, recommendations and decisions taken over the past five years which had not been implemented or only partially executed. Next, specific ways and means must be found to implement the programmes of action

adopted at the various United Nations conferences and summits held during the 1990s. The various components of the United Nations system should be able to estimate how much they proposed to allocate over the course of the next 10 years for the implementation of each plan or programme of action. Third, an annual schedule of implementation should be drawn up covering a 10-year period.

14. The first goal was nearing completion, and further information would be added as it became available. However, no concrete proposals had as yet been made regarding the second and third goals. Delegations should make use of the time before the next session of the working group to produce written proposals for discussion.

15. The agenda for development must not become just one more in the long series of documents that had been forgotten by all but specialists and negotiators. It must become an integral part of a process of change and evolution aimed at making international cooperation more effective and efficient. Its true impact could only be measured, however, by present and future generations.

16. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that, although some progress had been made in the elaboration of an agenda for development, his delegation had some concerns at the slow pace and sometimes unproductive nature of the discussions.

17. Commenting on the process of the deliberations themselves, he said that the drafting of an agenda for development should be completed before the end of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Therefore, all delegations should make the maximum use of the available time and resources. The idea of holding a short session of the working group in December, after the Committee completed its work, was worth considering. The other option would be to hold a session in January or February of 1996, which had the advantage of allowing more time for preparation and reflection.

18. Mr. RONNEBERG (Republic of the Marshall Islands) said that the growing predominance accorded to peace-keeping activities was having a detrimental effect on development activities. His delegation was keen to see an agenda for development completed in order to restore development to its important role in the United Nations system.

19. The Marshall Islands, like most developing countries, was facing difficult economic times. International assistance was becoming scarce and his Government was having difficulties in following through on some of its development projects. The comprehensive and ambitious programme of action resulting from the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States fit in well with the efforts of the Marshall Islands. His Government had joined with the neighbouring island States of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu in trying to forge a dynamic partnership in transportation and shipping. They faced perennial problems of funding for the implementation of other parts of the Programme of Action, however. There appeared to be no shortage of funds for hiring consultants to establish more plans, but the situation changed when they attempted to implement those plans. His delegation called on the international community to recognize the problems with the implementation of agreed programmes of action and to take action to rectify them.

20. The Marshall Islands would be undertaking a number of steps to improve the situation for women as a result of the Beijing conference and proposed to sign the agreement on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks in the near future. That agreement was very important to the Marshall Islands, which viewed the fisheries sector as one of the most important areas in which its economy could grow. The United Nations definitely had a role to play in helping it achieve its goals in those areas.

21. Mr. RAMOUL (Algeria) said that the discussions held within the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group had reflected a disturbingly shortsighted vision. Indeed, the disappointing results were to be expected given the lack of political will to relaunch the debate on economic growth in developing countries and to recognize the need to restructure international economic relations so as to ensure that developing countries could effectively participate in decision-making, and given that discussions had focused on the restructuring of the United Nations. The objective of the proposed agenda for development should be to create a new framework for cooperation for development and lay the foundations for a new partnership between North and South based on justice rather than charity. Such a partnership would ensure an equitable share of world market opportunities within the framework of mutually beneficial cooperation that would no longer be based on unilateral conditionalities. It was crucial to promote a new code of ethics to ensure the emergence of a more just and more equitable international order. The agenda for development should underscore the anachronistic nature of the current international economic and financial system which, each year, deprived developing countries of over $500 billion in economic opportunities due to restrictions or unequal access to world trade, labour and capital markets and "allowed" a net transfer of resources of $50 billion from the poor countries to the wealthy countries.

22. The tendency for the Bretton Woods institutions to become increasingly involved in direct economic management in the developing countries, instead of playing a role of global governance was cause for great concern, particularly since they were often incapable of redressing the imbalances in world monetary and financial markets, which usually operated against weak economies. Effective regulatory mechanisms governing all actors in the international economy should be instituted as a matter of urgency.

23. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that addressing the issue of development in terms of a confrontation between North and South was counterproductive. A partnership needed to be established between developing and developed countries. In that regard, the Government of Japan was proposing a new development strategy which would be based on the establishment of people-centred development objectives; the implementation of differentiated and comprehensive approaches to development; the formulation of a set of development targets combining various economic and social indicators to be achieved by the year 2010; the development of human resources and institution-building; the parallel promotion of peace and development with emphasis on issues such as human rights; environmental protection and social welfare; and South-South cooperation including the establishment of an effective facility within the United Nations Development Programme.

24. Given the diversity of most societies, Japan advocated a comprehensive, flexible approach to development which was country-specific and utilized a range of policy measures that included, but were not limited to, official development assistance. Donors would not impose packages or conditions and the comprehensive approach would be implemented in a flexible manner. Since the maintenance of peace was the basis of economic development, all countries should make further efforts towards disarmament. His Government, for its part, was actively involved in efforts to secure nuclear and small-arms disarmament. The recipient countries should make further efforts towards maintaining peace and reducing military expenditures while donor countries must assist those developing countries which made such efforts.

25. Mr. SINGH (India) said that due to a number of factors, which included aid fatigue and severe budgetary pressures in industrialized countries, the proposed agenda for development had become basically a summary of commitments undertaken at different conferences. That was somewhat unfortunate. It was, therefore, all the more necessary to use the framework of the agenda to focus attention on implementation of the agreements reached. Fortunately, the agenda was substantive, and it had been possible to prevent an arbitrary fragmentation of the concept of development. Significant work remained to be done with regard to the chapter dealing with the institutional framework. The latter should not be viewed in isolation but rather in the light of the first two chapters. Reform of institutions for the sake of reform or downsizing purely on account of budgetary constraints would not serve the cause of development. Efficiency and effectiveness were, of course, important but so also was the cause of development.

26. The proposed agenda for development should clearly indicate that the various facts of development could not be viewed in isolation. While developed countries had sought to highlight the role of domestic resources, those resources could not be mobilized unless there was rapid economic growth. A holistic approach was necessary to assess the balance between expenditure on economic services and that on social services. A sustainable strategy of social development and environmental protection presupposed a strong and broad-based growth in income and employment. The legitimate world-wide concern for social development and environmental protection should not be allowed to degenerate into additional conditionalities imposed on developing countries from abroad. Poverty eradication and economic growth and development would remain the overriding priorities for developing countries.

27. Turning to the question of diversity among developing countries, he noted that decisions regarding which countries should be eligible for assistance and preferences were often made unilaterally based on the subjective judgements of the developed countries. With the shrinking availability of resources for official development assistance (ODA), it had been suggested that access to resources and preferential arrangements should be limited to a smaller number of developing countries. There had even been suggestions to "individualize" developing countries and not recognize them as a category. It was important to recall that developing countries all experienced certain problems including inadequate availability of resources, low levels of technology, inadequate social and economic infrastructure and widespread poverty. It had already been recognized that some categories and groups of developing countries faced special

problems or critical situations. He urged the Committee to apply the development test to regimes governing international trade, technology transfers and financial flows. The Committee should also re-energize its efforts to promote the implementation of commitments and obligations undertaken earlier.

28. Mr. ZIAUDDIN (Bangladesh), referring to the synthesis text considered by the Working Group, said that there was need for more action-oriented language, in the section on policy framework, particularly relating to the core economic issues of trade, science and technology. The current text did not adequately refer to existing commitments for restoring economic growth nor did it refer to required measures in explicit terms.

29. On the issue of specific situations requiring priority action, he drew the Committee's attention to the results of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, which had come up with a number of action-oriented recommendations relating to external finance, trade and external debt. The relevant language should be incorporated in the proposed agenda for development.

30. Concerning institutional issues, he said that the United Nations system should be more responsive to the development needs of the developing countries and the various institutions that dealt with development issues and the follow-up to major international conferences and programmes of action should be strengthened and adequately funded. The relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was very important for development. The same applied to the World Trade Organization. He stressed the need for democratizing the decision-making system and ensuring greater transparency of those institutions. Coordination between the United Nations and those institutions must be enhanced, and the Bretton Woods institutions should be encouraged to take far-reaching measures to expand investment in the social sectors in the developing ccuntries.

31. Mr. REGALADO PAPINI (El Salvador) said that the experience of Central America was proof that peace and security were not possible without integrated development, which implied democracy, social justice and respect for human rights. Efforts had been made to end armed conflict, achieve peace and improve the well-being of the peoples of Central America but much ground remained to be covered to eradicate poverty, unemployment and to make improvements in health care, education and the environment. Other regions of the world faced similar or worst problems.

32. He expressed optimism at the prospect of an agenda for development and stressed the need to establish an order of priorities for the objectives of the proposed agenda, and to balance them with the priorities of the Agenda for Peace so as to strengthen the Organization's capacity to confront economic and social challenges. The proposed agenda was vital for Central America, and the search for a new framework for international cooperation acquired special relevance given the decline in development resources and the need to follow up the decisions adopted at recent international conferences.

33. Mr. ZOUBI (Jordan), reiterating his Government's full support for the proposed agenda's five dimensions said that his Government had previously

proposed that the agenda should include a bridging mechanism. The proposal of the Jordanian Government included the adoption of objective evaluation criteria whereby countries would be judged on the basis of their performance in attempting to achieve sustainable development; a plan to alleviate debt overhang and put a ceiling on debt repayments; the provision of financial packages to finance multinational projects and special assistance to those countries seeking to fulfil the requirements of an open economy. There was an urgent need to develop positive international incentive plans. Countries that embraced the free economy approach did so under pressure to repay their debt or to acquire foreign assistance. The World Hearings on Development which had been organized the previous year had been invaluable.

34. Mr. CUI Tianmay (China) said that the proposed agenda for development should solidify and strengthen the common understanding reached by the Committee in recent years in the field of development and should promote international cooperation and development and, at the same time, strengthen the role of the United Nations in international cooperation for development. It would also redress the imbalances in funding between peace-keeping and development activities. The expressed satisfaction at the progress already made by the Working Group but urged it to attempt to complete its negotiations at the current session. To ensure the orderly and efficient conduct of the negotiations, a progressive approach should be adopted, in other words the policy framework part should be completed before other problems were tackled. He stressed that the principle of consensus should be adhered to and the voice of the numerous developing countries heeded.

35. Mr. ŽEBRAKOVSKÝ (Czech Republic) said that recent work on an agenda for development adequately reflected hopes for establishing a new conceptual framework for development-oriented activities and taking a fresh look at the development mandate of the United Nations. The text of an agenda for development, which should be completed without delay, could be used as a basis for undertaking far-reaching reforms of the United Nations system. The new comprehensive vision of multilateral development cooperation and partnership must be accompanied by institutional reforms and means of implementation. A vision of action for human-centred development was needed which would embrace potential development capacity and resources while identifying possible new activities. An agenda for development must therefore be an open and flexible document rather than a static snapshot of a single moment in history.

36. The Economic and Social Council should be the steering body of all United Nations development programmes and should facilitate the implementation of recommendations adopted at major United Nations conferences while producing strong policy guidance with respect to other measures for promoting development. The new development challenges could be better addressed through the Council than through new global conferences. Furthermore, the regional commissions also had an important role to play. However, the most crucial challenge was the upgrading of cooperation and coordination of development efforts with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

37. The Czech Republic, one of the countries in transition, was now entering the post-transformation stage of development. In that new phase, it would

endeavour to play a more active role in development and increase its cooperation with developing countries.

38. Mr. RESHETNYAK (Ukraine) said that the first two chapters prepared by the Ad Hoc Working Group reflected all the key aspects of development. The statements made in the general debate in the plenary of the General Assembly and in the current discussion in the Second Committee contained very useful information which should be taken into account in the preparation of the third chapter, concerning institutional issues and follow-up. The Working Group also should make maximum use of the consensus formulas contained in the final documents of recent United Nations conferences on economic and social matters. The relevant elements of the balanced decision taken at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council with respect to the coordination of activities of international conferences held under United Nations auspices also should be taken into account in the third chapter.

39. There was no need to establish new decision-making structures in the economic and social spheres. Rather, the appropriate existing bodies should be strengthened, principally by strengthening the coordination functions of the Economic and Social Council. The agenda for development should clearly reflect the roles of Governments and resident coordinators in the context of the decentralization of the operational activities of the United Nations.

40. The Working Group had not made sufficient use of material contained in existing United Nations documents, in particular, reports by the Secretary-General on the subject. Those documents contained concise statements of the fundamental aspects of development and their interrelationships. Much of the material proposed for consideration by the Working Group was amorphous in structure and somewhat lacking in clarity; however, it was very informative on substantive matters.

41. The problems of the countries in transition were adequately reflected in the first two chapters and he hoped that the third chapter would also respect the principle of universality and that measures proposed to enhance the effectiveness of international cooperation for sustainable development would take into account the interests of all countries without exception.

42. Mr. KEBEDE (Ethiopia) commended the Working Group on its efforts since the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The agenda for development should focus on the goal of achieving a substantial and rapid improvement in the economic and social conditions of impoverished nations. It must focus on key factors responsible for the gap between wealthy and poor nations and should propose concrete policies and action to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to development. Among the key issues which should be addressed were poverty eradication, global macroeconomic policy coordination, industrial development, economic diversification and the development of infrastructures, improved resource flows, including debt relief; commodities policy; human resource development and capacity-building.

43. The success of the proposed agenda for development would require a sustainable, predictable and incremental flow of resources. In addition to foreign direct investment and official development assistance, the agenda should

call for innovative methods of mobilizing resources. The ideas raised in the report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life concerning such mechanisms deserved close consideration in that regard.

44. The effective implementation of an agenda for development required appropriate institutional, follow-up and assessment mechanisms. The institution involved must be development-oriented, democratic and flexible. Follow-up and assessment mechanisms must be adequate and specialized in order to ensure that growth and development in the developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, occurred in the shortest possible time. The mandate of the United Nations in the development and economic spheres should be fully exercised in that regard. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should be accorded more leadership responsibilities on development policy issues.

45. The General Assembly, as the highest intergovernmental organ, could effectively perform the follow-up and assessment functions required. The revitalized Economic and Social Council should be adequately equipped to enable it efficiently to fulfil its mandate. Similarly, the regional economic commissions should be strengthened and consolidated.

46. The time had come to reform the Bretton Woods institutions and to define their role in the implementation of the agenda for development. There was an immediate need to democratize their governance and decision-making processes, in particular, in order to meet the specific needs of developing countries. Their activities should be harmonized and coordinated with those of the United Nations and their complementary role in the promotion of international cooperation for development pursuant to Articles 57 and 63 of the Charter of the United Nations should be enhanced.

47. Mr. ELTINAY (Sudan) said that the proposed agenda for development should complement the Agenda for Peace. The divisive policies of the colonialist era had imposed psychological, cultural, economic and social obstacles which had profoundly affected newly independent States for decades. Those obstacles could be surmounted only through development. The World Conference on Human Rights had been an important turning-point because it had proclaimed that the right to development was a fundamental human right. It was a source of concern that efforts were being made to deprive certain victimized States of their right to development on the pretext that instability impeded the development process. In his own country, development assistance had been halted despite the fact that the Government and rebel forces had been negotiating a peaceful solution to the problems in the southern part of the country. The agenda for development should emphasize that the right to development was an inalienable human right, the violation of which constituted a violation of international human rights instruments.

48. Calls for the adoption of a market economy and more open economies should be coupled with policies which restored confidence in international economic relations and an emphasis on the importance of partnership for development. The appropriate United Nations machinery should be strengthened in order to enable it to shoulder its responsibilities with respect to the implementation of the agenda. His delegation favoured the convening of an international conference on

all aspects of development in order to ensure the successful implementation of the conclusions and resolutions adopted at various recent international conferences on social issues.

49. Mr. JAREMCZUK (Poland) said that his delegation had from the outset been in favour of altering the institutional structure of the United Nations system in order to enable it to play a more creative role in efforts to achieve sustainable development. It welcomed the new language proposed by the Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Development with respect to the special problems and features of countries with economies in transition. In addition to confirming the realities of the transformation process, the new proposed text revealed the support of the international community for the general direction of the economic reforms under way in those countries and observed that the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the world economy would enhance economic cooperation by enabling developing countries to benefit from scientific and industrial know-how provided by the countries in transition.

50. With regard to chapter III of the proposed agenda, relating to institutional issues and follow-up, his delegation supported a new approach to international cooperation for development designed to meet the expectations of all involved, including the least developed countries. It also favoured an enhanced role for the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for economic and social development, to be exercised principally by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. His delegation was in favour of strengthening cooperation and clarifying the division of labour among all partners in the development process, in particular, the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The prompt implementation by Governments of the outcomes of the recent major conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations would also serve to further such cooperation.

51. Mr. SINON (Malaysia) said that his delegation was concerned at the tendency of some countries in the discussions on an agenda for development to focus more on restructuring than on specifically addressing the broad problems of development. It was imperative that the agenda for development address the serious plight of the substantial majority of the world's population, which lived in poverty and had to fight daily just to survive.

52. His delegation was in favour of the reform and revitalization of the global system in the economic, social and related fields. In order to secure global peace and prosperity, it was essential to close the widening gap between the developed and developing countries and to ensure that development was equitable and sustainable. The United Nations system should play the central role in that reform process. All the players must be involved: Governments, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The role and contribution of the latter must be given appropriate recognition in the agenda for development.

53. Rapid globalization and integration had presented new opportunities and challenges which had left some countries further marginalized and others increasingly vulnerable to the vagaries of fluctuating capital flows and sudden

shocks caused by the need to make structural adjustments. The new global system must address those problems and must avoid imposing conditionalities or resorting to unilateral restrictive measures. Countries must regard one another as partners in progress rather than as adversaries or competitors, and the commitments agreed to at various recent international conferences must be honoured. It was particularly refreshing to note that the European Union had made a serious commitment to meet the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. His delegation hoped that the member States of the European Union and other developed countries would fulfil that commitment as soon as possible.

54. The reform of the Bretton Woods institutions was a priority and should focus on their governance structure, which should reflect new global realities and the increasing contributions of new and emerging economies to global production and trade. Those institutions should not function merely as lending institutions but should also address development issues. The United Nations must spearhead that reform process, which also should address the global process of macroeconomic decision-making. The views of the developing countries must be heard as well.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.